

The Name 'Christian'.

by Elijah Goodwin

Elijah Goodwin's sermon explores the profound significance of the name 'Christian' as a title of identity, ownership, and divine authority for believers in Christ.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 26:8, 1 Chronicles 16:22, Isaiah 62:2, Acts 11:26, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 John 2:20, Revelation 3:8

Topics: "Christian Identity", "Priesthood Of Believers"

Description

Elijah Goodwin preaches about the significance of the name 'Christian' as the family name of the religious association, derived from 'Christ' meaning 'anointed.' He emphasizes that all who wear this name are Scripturally regarded as the anointed people of God, reflecting the priesthood of believers under the new covenant. Goodwin delves into the sacredness of anointing in the Old Testament, highlighting the reverence for God's anointed ones. He explores the distinction, property, and patronymic nature of the name 'Christian,' pointing out its universal application and commemorative influence. Goodwin concludes by discussing the divine authority behind the name 'Christian,' supported by biblical references and prophecies.

Transcript

"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."--Acts 11:26.

HAVING spoken, in this series of discourses, on the new church in contrast with the old Jewish kingdom, and having considered that church under the figure of the human body, of which Christ is the head, and having pointed out some of the leading features or distinguishing characteristics of the church of Christ, as a sect that was everywhere spoken against--in doing which, we have laid down some plain rules by which the true church may always be known--we propose now to speak expressly of the name "Christian," as the great family name of this religious association. This title was merely referred to in the preceding sermon, but we now propose to make it the subject of a separate discourse.

Without stating any particular order to be observed in this lecture, we proceed to observe:

1. That the term "Christian" is derived from the term "Christ." The term "Christ" is translated from the Greek word *kristos*, which means [453] "anointed." O *Kristos*: the Christ the anointed One. Seeing, then, that the term "Christian" is derived from the term "Christ," which means "anointed," may not all who wear this name Scripturally, or who are Scripturally entitled to it, be regarded as the anointed people of God? Under the old covenant, all the priests were anointed with holy oil. Under the new covenant, all the

covenanted people of God are regarded as priests. Peter says: "You are a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). Then, are not these spiritual priests anointed? Their name "Christian" indicates that they are. To this holy anointing the apostle John refers when he says: "Ye have an unction [Krisma, that with which any one is anointed, an anointing], and ye know all things" (1 John 2:20). (See also v. 27.)

Now, there was a very great sacredness attached to anointing, under the Old Testament dispensation. I remember, on one occasion, when Saul was seeking the life of King David, having heard that "David had hid himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon," that he marched his army of "three thousand chosen men" into the wilderness of Zeph, and pitched his tent "in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon." Wearied with the march, he and his army lay down to rest, leaving Abner, his captain, to keep guard; but he also fell into a deep sleep. [454]

David, seeing their position and condition, from the hill, took Abishai, and went even unto Saul. There he lay, wrapped up in profound sleep, and there lay his entire army in the same condition. "Then Abishai said to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand this day: therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" (1 Sam. 26:8, 9). They took Saul's spear, and the cruse of water from his head, and left him to enjoy his sleep. Thus, notwithstanding Saul was anointed with a direct warrant from God, and though he had been pursuing David for a long time, fully resolved upon his death, yet even when David had him completely in his power, he would not touch him, just because he had been anointed. Addressing Saul afterward, he said: "The Lord delivered thee into my hand to-day, but I would not stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam. 26:23).

The chapter contains a very important lesson, which all would do well to study; but I have merely referred to it to show how sacred this anointing was regarded. Hence God said: "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (1 Chron. 16:22). Then, if Christians are God's anointed ones, as their name teaches, oh, how [455] sacred are they in His sight! If His ancient people, who were only a type of Christians, were to Him as dear as the apple of His eye, what must be His tender care for those who are His according to the stipulations of the new and better covenant? Who would not be a Christian, in view of this glorious fact?

2. This name is a name of distinction, intended to distinguish those who wear it from all other people. Indeed, this is the only use we have for names. We use proper names for the purpose of distinguishing one person or thing from another person or thing. Doubtless this is the reason why the Lord, in the beginning, permitted our father Adam to give names to all the cattle, and fowls of the air, and beasts of the field. This was done, so that in all coming time every kind of living creature might be distinguished by name.

Well, the same is true in reference to organized societies. Whether the society be literary, political or religious, it must have a name, so it may be known when it is spoken to or spoken of. Now, when this new man, or church, was set up, there were very many religious sects and parties in the world, and each of these had its respective name; hence it was necessary that this church should also have its name. It is also worthy of remark that ancient names usually expressed some quality or circumstances connected with the persons or things to which they were applied. Adam means [456] earthly, red; Moses, taken out of the water; Herod, the glory of the skin; Pharisees, separatists, etc. How natural, then, that this new church should be called "Christian," which would not only distinguish it from all other parties then in existence, or

that ever should come into being, but that, by this significant title, the purity of their hearts and lives might be expressed, and they pointed out as the anointed children of God.

3. The term "Christian" is intended to point out those who bear it as the property of Christ. It implies that they are not their own, but that they belong to Christ, being bought with His precious blood. Peter, in giving directions to the elders, says they should not discharge their duties "for filthy lucre, but of the ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). In this Scripture, the church is called the heritage of God. The term which is here rendered "heritage" is *kleeros*, which occurs thirteen times in the New Testament. It is translated in the Common Version, "lot" eight times, "part" twice, "inheritance" twice, and "heritage" once; namely, in the Scripture just quoted. This word literally means "a lot." Dr. McKnight, in his note upon this verse, says "the word *kleeros* properly signifies 'a lot.' But because the land of Canaan was divided among the Israelites by lot, the word came to signify 'an heritage.' Wherefore, believers being [457] God's people, or portion, the different churches, or congregations for worship, are called here God's heritage. In process of time, the name *kleeros* (clergy) was appropriated to the ministers of the gospel, because, being considered as the successors of the Levitical priests, they were regarded as God's lot, or portion."

Yes, Christian reader, that is the way this term became the exclusive title of preachers. At the beginning, it was not so. The Lord's people is His portion, over whom these elders were not to act as lords; for the apostle says: "Not as being lords over God's heritage"--God's lot, or clergy. Every true and faithful disciple of Christ belongs to the clergy; and hence it is a very presumptuous procedure for any class of men to appropriate this title exclusively to themselves. But I know no one name, ever used as the name of an organized body of people, that points out those to whom it is applied as the people of God, with so little circumlocution as the name "Christian."

But I fear that all who bear this name do not always consider this truth as they should. Do you, Christian reader, when you call yourself a Christian--or when you speak of yourself as belonging to the Christian congregation--appreciate the fact that you are not your own, that you are the property of the Lord, and, therefore, that you ought to "glorify him in your body and spirit, which are his"? [458]

4. The name "Christian" is a catholic name, intended to swallow up all other ecclesiastical titles. As we have seen, there were many religious parties when Christ came into our world, and each party had its respective religious cognomen; but the church which Jesus built was intended to embrace the good of all parties, hence this new, catholic body should be called by a truly catholic name, which would apply alike to the members of this new body, or church, wherever found. Such is the name "Christian."

When a Jew was baptized into this body, he left his former name on the other side of the baptismal wave, and arose on the Lord's side of the line that separated them that serve the Lord from them that serve him not, bearing the simple name "Christian." When a Gentile obeyed the gospel, he left his old name behind, and was now known as a "Christian." This great family title swallowed up all others, and designated the people of God without any accompanying, qualifying terms.

Antioch, too, seems to have been the most fitting place to first bestow that name, this being the first Christian congregation which was composed of persons from both nations. In Jerusalem, and the regions round about, there were congregations of disciples of Christ formed exclusively of believing Jews. In Samaria, many of the Samaritans "believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, and were baptized." At [459] the house of Cornelius, many of the Gentiles embraced the truth, and

became the disciples of Christ. Still, they kept up a kind of division between Jew and Gentile. But in Antioch these two were made visibly one. Here was a congregation formed of members from both nations, and hence it was right, it was appropriate, to give the great family name at this place; and therefore "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

5. My fifth proposition in reference to the important name is that it is a patronymic name. I mean by this, that it is intended to refer to the founder of the church and the author of our holy religion. A patronymic name simply means "a name of men or women, derived from that of their parents or ancestors" (Webster). But the names of states, kingdoms, cities, societies or churches, derived from the founders of these organisms, are also patronymics. Pennsylvania is a patronymic name, and refers to William Penn, the honest old Quaker from whom the State was named; Washington, when applied to the capital of the United States, is a patronymic name, referring to that celebrated chieftain who is so justly styled the "Father of His Country." So, the name "Lutheran" is a patronymic name, derived from the great reformer, Martin Luther, who is regarded as the founder of that religious denomination that is called by that name. Wesleyan is another name of the same sort. [460]

So, the name "Christian" is a patronymic name, derived from Christ, the builder of the church (see Matt. 16:18), and the author of the religion of the New Testament. All such names have a commemorative influence. As long as towns and cities are called "Washington," the name of that great man will never be forgotten; as long as there is a religious denomination called "Lutherans," so long will the name of that mighty reformer be handed down to posterity. Should all the records of the sayings and doings of Martin Luther be buried in oblivion, yet would his name be repeated and remembered every time the name of that church is called; and those who wear the name would still talk to each other and to their children of the deeds of the reformer, and thus he would still be remembered by his followers.

So, the name "Christian" carries the name "Christ" in its own bosom, and as long as there is a people on earth called by that name, the author and finisher of the Christians' system of faith can never be forgotten.

This can not be said of any other church name known to me. The name "Episcopalian" would remind one of bishops; the name "Presbyterian" would remind one of aged persons, or elders, as officials in the church; the name "Methodist" would suggest the idea of a body of persons who work by method; but not one of these ever directs the thoughts to Christ, the Son of the living God. [461] And even the Scriptural names--brethren, saints, disciples--without some adjunct, would not do it. These are Scriptural terms, and no disciple of Christ should be ashamed to wear them; but still, the pronunciation of them does not so directly lift the thoughts to Christ, as the simple appellative "Christian." No wonder that the apostle should say: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this account" (1 Pet. 4:16).

6. This name "Christian" seems to have been given by divine authority. This is my sixth proposition in reference to this consecrated name.

This seems to be reasonable. If Christ built the church; if He gave its constitution and laws and ordinances; if He is the head of the church--is it not reasonable that He should name it?

I will here introduce some remarks of the very learned Dr. A. Clark, upon this subject. As he was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he can not be supposed to have any sectarian or traditionary partialities for this name. In his notes upon Acts 11:26 he says: "The word *chreematisai*, in our common text, which we translate 'were called,' signifies, in the New Testament, to appoint, warn or nominate by

divine direction. In this sense, the word is used in Matt. 2:12; Luke 2:26, and in Acts 10:22. If, therefore, the name was given by divine appointment, it is most likely that Paul and Barnabas were directed to [462] give it, and that, therefore, the name 'Christian' is from God, as well as that grace and holiness which are essentially required and implied in the character. Before this time, the Jewish converts were simply called, among themselves, disciples--i. e., scholars--believers, saints, the church, or assembly; and by their enemies, Nazarenes, Galileans, the men of this way, or sect; and perhaps by other names which are not come down to us. They considered themselves as one family, and hence the appellation of 'brethren' was frequent among them. It was the design of God to make all who believed of one heart and one soul, that they might consider Him as their Father, and live and love like children of the same household. A Christian, therefore, is the highest character which any human being can bear upon earth; and to receive it from God, as these seem to have done, how glorious the title!"

Again, the Doctor says in his general remarks at the end of the chapter: "It appears that 'Christian' was the first general appellation of the followers of the blessed Lord, and there is presumptive evidence, as we have seen, that this appellative came by divine appointment. How very few of those who profess this religion are satisfied with this title. That very church that arrogates all to itself has totally abandoned this title, and its members call themselves Roman Catholic, which is absurd; because the adjective and substantive [463] include opposite ideas; catholic signifies universal, and Roman signifies belonging to Rome. If it be merely Roman, it can not be catholic; if it be catholic, it can not be confined to Rome; but it is not catholic or universal, in any sense of the word, for it contains but a small part of the people who profess Christianity. The term 'Protestant' has more common sense in it, but not much more piety. Almost all sects and parties proceed in the same line; but 'Christian' is a title seldom heard of, and the spirit and practice of Christianity but rarely occur. When all return to the spirit of the gospel, they will probably resume the appellative of 'Christian.'"

I have introduced this long quotation from Dr. Clark, for three purposes:

(1) To show, to the reader of this discourse, the reasons which the Doctor had for thinking that the name "Christian" was given by divine authority, and thus to place this great and good man in favor of the proposition now under consideration.

(2) To present his views of the cause which led to an abandonment of this name as a church name, and the adoption of other, sectarian and unauthorized titles. He says: "When all return to the spirit of the gospel, they will probably resume the appellative 'Christian.'" This shows that this name was dispensed with by a departure from the spirit of the gospel. This is the unvarnished truth in the case. The Doctor's criticism on the [464] name "Roman Catholic" is very just and true and forcible; but, with the same skill and learning which he employed, many other church names might be shown to be as inconsistent. There is the name "Protestant Episcopal Church." The Doctor admits that the name "Protestant" has not much more piety in it than the name "Roman Catholic." But take the entire name, and what does it mean? "Protestant" means "one of the party who adhered to Luther, at the Reformation in 1529, and protested against a decree of Emperor Charles V, and the Diet of Spires; and appealed to a general council" (Webster). Episcopal is translated from episkopos, which means overseer; church is from ekklesia, which means assembly, congregation. Then, Protestant Episcopal Church would mean a congregation of overseers protesting against a decree of Charles V. Methodist Episcopal Church would mean a congregation of overseers, all acting by method. Baptist Church means a congregation of baptizers. How much more does either of the above examples accord with truth and consistency than the name "Roman Catholic"?

(3) But my third object in introducing the Doctor's testimony was to show his views of the use that will likely be made of the name "Christian" "when all return to the spirit of the gospel." From what he says, he must have believed in a time to come when all true believers in Christ will return to the spirit of the gospel; and [465] that when that time comes, all these party names will be laid aside,--and the followers of the blessed Saviour--will be simply called "Christians." And oh, who does not long to see such a time? Then, as at the beginning, if any man shall say, "I am a Christian," all will know his religious position. It will not have to be asked, "what church do you belong to?" The name "Christian" will show.

It may not be improper to notice the three passages of Scripture referred to by Dr. Clark, to illustrate or confirm the meaning which he has attached to the Greek word *kreematizo*. These are Matt. 2:12; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22. In the first, the name of God is not found in the original; the whole phrase "warned of God" is translated from the simple word *kreematizo*. The same is true in reference to Acts 10:22. The word is rendered "revealed" in Luke 2:26, and the Holy Spirit is named as the agent by whom the revelation is made; but an admonition made by the Holy Spirit is of the same divine authority as if made by the heavenly Father Himself. These examples show very clearly that the king's translators understood this term *kreematizo* to signify, as Greenfield has defined it, "in the New Testament, to impart a divine warning or admonition; give instructions or directions under the guidance of inspiration."

This word occurs nine times in the New Testament, and is translated, in the Common Version, [466] "warned of" (or "from") "God," four times; "revealed," once; "called," twice; "that spake," once, and "admonished," once. In all these occurrences of the word, there are but two that admit of any doubt as to the fact that the warning, revealing or speaking came by divine authority. These are Rom. 7:3 and Acts 11:26. In Rom. 7:3, "She shall be called an adulteress," surely means more than that she shall be so styled by her enemies, or by the people; it signifies that she shall be so called by the will of God. So I think in our text it means that the disciples were called Christians by the divine authority which Paul and Barnabas received from God.

In further proof of the proposition that the name "Christian" is of divine origin, we will compare Amos 9:12 with Acts 15:16, 17. The former reads thus: "At that day, I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen down, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen which are called by my name." The latter reads: "After this, I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, with the Lord, who doeth all these things." [467]

1. My first remark upon these Scriptures is that whatever is done, or is to be done, in fulfillment of them, is the work of the Lord, for it is here declared that "the Lord doeth all these things."

2. The apostles understood Amos 9:12 to apply to the Christian church in the gospel dispensation. At the time the apostle James made this quotation, the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem were sitting in solemn council, deliberating on one of the most important questions that had ever disturbed the church of God. The question was: May the Gentiles become Christians, and be saved, without being circumcised--without becoming Jews by proselytism? In order to prove that the Gentiles may be saved without being circumcised, and keeping the law of Moses, James quotes Amos 9:12. "The heathen," in Amos, and "the Gentiles," in Acts, mean the same people.

Now, if James had not understood the prophecy of Amos to apply to the church of Christ in the gospel day, he could not have used this Scripture in defense of his position. And had the other apostles believed that this prophecy had a literal meaning, and is to be fulfilled at some far-distant day, they surely would have made their objection to James' application of it. But we hear of no such objection, hence we must conclude that they were all of one mind upon this subject.

3. We see that, according to this prophecy, the Lord's people were to be called by His name, in [468] the gospel dispensation. "To be called by my name," as in Amos, and "upon whom my name is called," as in Acts, mean the same thing.

Now, I ask, How is it that the Lord's people were to be called by His name? Are they so called now? Or have they ever been? What is meant by being called by His name?

In answer to this question, and in further illustration of the position now assumed, I will here introduce a quotation from the learned and pious B. W. Stone, who now rests in paradise:

"The Greek verb *epikaleomai* is both in the passive and middle voice, and signifies both passive and active. In the New Testament, when its passive voice occurs, it uniformly signifies 'surnamed,' or 'called'--when its middle voice occurs, it as uniformly signifies 'to invoke,' 'call upon,' or 'appeal to.'

"I will bring to view the texts in the New Testament where the passive of this verb is used, and commonly translated 'surnamed.' Matt. 10:3: 'And Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus.' Luke 20:3: 'Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot.' Acts 1:23: 'And they appointed two, Joses called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus.' Acts 4:26: 'And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas.' Acts 10:5: 'And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.' The same phrase occurs in the eighteenth and thirty-second verses, and [469] also in chap. 11:13. Acts 12:12: 'He came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark.' The same occurs in the twenty-fifth verse. Acts 15:22: 'Judas, surnamed Barsabas.' James says (2:7): 'Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?' or surnamed, for it is the same word." Undoubtedly this name blasphemed was Christ, or Christians. Now, reader, notice. "The prophet Amos says (9:12) 'And of all the heathen which are called by my name.' James quotes this, passage in Acts 15:17, thus: 'And all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called.' This demonstrably proves that the phrase to be called by my name is the same as upon whom my name is called.

"This phraseology is of frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, and signifies there surnames attached to their proper names. Israel was one of those names; for in this name is *El*, the Hebrew name for God. This was the name given by the Lord to Jacob, and by this name were all his children called--the children of Israel. Thus, the phrase, 'the Gentiles who are called by thy name,' or, 'on whom thy name is called,' is the same as that 'by which ye are called,' or surnamed, which all must agree to be Christian, after Christ."--Chr. Mess., Vol. XIV., pp. 161, 162.

Then, to be called by the Lord's name, according to Amos 9:12, is to be called "Christian." To make this matter more plain, read Dan. 9:19: [470] "O, Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for throe own sake, O my God, for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Now, on what other principle was this true, except the one that was named above? *El*, one of the Hebrew names for God, is incorporated in the word "Israel": hence, whenever the name "Israel" was pronounced, the name of God was pronounced. When God gave Jacob this name, he placed His own name upon him. Well, then, might the prophet say: "Thy people are called by thy name."

So, the name of Christ is embosomed in the name "Christian"; and hence, whenever that name is pronounced, the name of Christ is spoken. Surely the apostle had reference to this fact when he said: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you" (1 Pet. 4:14). According to this same apostle, to suffer as a Christian, and to suffer for the name of Christ, is the same thing. He says if you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are happy. "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters; yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." Thus are the phrases "for the name of Christ," and "as a Christian," used interchangeably, as both meaning the same thing.

The same fact is referred to by the apostle when he says: "Do not rich men oppress you, and [471] draw you before the judgment-seat? Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by the which you are called" (Jas. 2:6, 7). This worthy name was surely the name of Christ or Christian, by which they were called. How appropriate, then, was the response of the king, when he had heard the argument of Paul in favor of Christianity: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). The king was almost persuaded to receive the Christian faith, adopt the Christian's course of life, and take upon him that worthy name by which the disciples of Christ were called. But, alas! he was only almost persuaded. And how many go this far, and yet die in their sins!

The prophet Isaiah, fired with the spirit of inspiration, looked forward to the gospel day, and said: "You shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen, for the Lord shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name." And again: "Thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isa. 65:15; 62:2). Now, I ask, what is this new name? Dr. Clark says this new name is "Christian." If he is correct, then the name "Christian" is given by the mouth of the Lord.

If this new name is not "Christian," then this prophecy has never been fulfilled; for this is the only new name by which the people of God were called in the New Testament. They are called saints because of the purity of their hearts and [472] lives, but this is an Old Testament name. They were called brethren, but this is no new name. David said: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). They were called disciples, but this name was known to the Old Testament saints, and was also applied to students of the different schools of philosophy. Indeed, I remember no new name by which the followers of the Lord were called, save the name "Christian." It was a new name, emphatically; a name unknown to Jew or Gentile until Paul and Barnabas had assembled with the church at Antioch a whole year, and had taught much people. Then it was, while these divinely authorized teachers were fully instructing the people in the holy will of God, that the disciples were called Christians first. Then was fulfilled the word of the Lord, which with: "You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name."

I will now proceed to answer some objections to making this the name of the church, and to considering it a name of divine origin.

1. It may be objected that if it can be proven that this name came by divine direction, as the surname, or family name, of the Lord's people, then we should discontinue every other New Testament name. But I can not see why this should be so. The Lord changed the name of Jacob to Israel, but he was often called Jacob after that, and even. [473] his descendants were called Jacob, as a national title. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deut. 32:9), was said near three hundred years after Jacob's name was changed to Israel by divine authority. Why, then, may not the followers of Christ answer to any name that was acknowledged by the disciples of Christ in the days of the apostles, and still

regard the name "Christian" as the great family name which the mouth of the Lord hath named? Paul addressed the members of the church as saints, the servants of God, the beloved brethren, and yet he said: "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14, 15). This must mean that the family was named "Christian" after Christ.

2. But it is said, by those who wish to justify themselves in wearing other and unscriptural names, that the name "Christian" was given to the disciples of Christ by their enemies, as a name of reproach.

Now, I can not see any reason for such a conclusion. They were called by some names by their enemies out of contempt, but we never read of any apostle or disciple acknowledging these names. Can you suppose, dear reader, that if the apostle Peter had known that this name came from the enemies of the cause of Christ, he would have left it on record for the comfort of the Lord's [474] people to the end of time? "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on that behalf," or account. Why did he not say, If any man suffer as a Nazarene? Because he would not give countenance to a name which had been hurled at him and his brethren out of contempt.

When King Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," would the apostle have given countenance to that name, as he did, had he known that it originated in the dark, black hearts of the children of the wicked one? Suppose some of our brethren should be preaching to a congregation, and, while urging the holy claims of Christianity upon his audience, one should arise and say, "Well, sir, you have almost persuaded me to be a Campbellite," would he be likely to reply: "I would to God that you, and all who hear me to-day, were not only almost, but altogether, such as I am"? By no means. If he thought the man sincere, but ignorant of the right way of the Lord, he would be likely to say: "My dear friend, I am not trying to make Campbellites; I only desire for you to become a Christian."

There is a sect of Methodists in England who, on account of their religious exercises, are called Ranters. Now, suppose, at the close of a sermon delivered by one of the preachers of that party, some one should speak out in the crowd, and say, [475] "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Ranter," what do you think the preacher would say? Surely, he would not acknowledge the name "Ranter" on such a solemn occasion as this. No, nor would Paul, standing before the king's court, not knowing but he was making his last public address on the subject of salvation through the blood of Christ, with legal chains upon his emaciated person, and all the sanctions of his apostolic office resting upon his conscience, have even appeared to sanction a name which had been hurled at the church of God by the bitter opposers of the blessed Jesus. But he did acknowledge the name "Christian," by saying: "Would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29).

3. But this name is objected to, as a church name, because it is too exclusive. For a church to call itself the Christian Church, they say, seems to imply that none other are Christians; it is appropriating a name, which of right belongs to all the people of God, to one individual party of the disciples of Christ.

But, if there is anything wrong in this, I ask, At whose door does the sin lie? At the door of these who are endeavoring to return to the old paths--that are laboring to bring the church of God to apostolic ground in all things? or does it lie at the door of those who have departed from [476] the primitive order of things, and have assumed human names by which to distinguish themselves? Surely if there is any sin in the case, those who have taken names which God has not authorized must account to the Judge of the living and the dead for that sin.

It must be admitted by all that there was a time when this name was not too exclusive. It was not too exclusive when Peter said: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on that account." And had the church remained pure, or, according to Dr. Clark, had she not departed from the spirit of the gospel, this name would not be too exclusive now.

I am willing to admit that it would be wrong for a body of people, organized upon a constitution, or confession of faith, of human origin, and governed by laws of their own enacting, to call themselves the Christian Church. They may--nay, they should--adopt a name corresponding with the nature of their organism; but I doubt the propriety of their claiming to be the church of Christ, after they have thus organized.

When we repudiate all unscriptural titles, and adopt the names by which the first followers of Christ were called, we do it from principle. Beholding the awful ravages which sectarianism has made upon our holy religion--the army of the Lord's hosts being thus weakened--while the [477] prince of darkness is mustering his combined forces against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us;" and while infidels and skeptics were laughing at the division among the Lord's people--we began to inquire for the cause. It was soon discovered that party spirit had originated party creeds, and party organizations upon those creeds had given birth to party names, and that these things were standing directly in the way of the success of the gospel and the salvation of sinners.

We therefore resolved to clear ourselves of the responsibility of resting upon those who caused or kept up this state of things. But how was this to be done? Shall we form a more liberal creed than any now in existence, and try to bring all to that? We could not hope to do that. But should we bring many of the more liberal-minded to unite with us on such a creed, we would only have made one more sect, and those who remained upon their old party platforms would justly charge us with presumption, for asking them to unite with us, while they had just as good a right to make a creed, and originate a party, as we had. And then we feared to meet the awful question in the last day: "Who hath required this at your hands?" We therefore resolved to take our stand on the Bible alone determined to reject everything in Christianity for which we could find no precept [478] or precedent in the teaching of the apostles of the Lamb.

Now, no one will say that this was wrong; for to say so would be to say that the church of Christ, under the immediate inspection, direction and supervision of the holy apostles, commenced its career in error!

Then, if the principle upon which we set out was right, what could we do but adopt Scriptural names? When we adopt the name "Christian" as the family name of God's people, we mean no disrespect for any body of people on earth; we do not do it for the purpose of exalting ourselves, or abasing others; we are driven to it by the holy principles which we have adopted. We do it, therefore, from principle, and to exalt Him by whom are all things, and for whom are all things.

4. It is sometimes urged, as an objection to this name, that it is too assuming; it is taking too high ground. But, I ask, was it taking too high ground for the disciples to be called Christians first at Antioch? If it was not too assuming then, it ought not to be so considered now.

5. But it is objected that the church is not worthy of so sacred a title. I once heard of a good old Baptist brother saying, when the subject of changing the name "Baptist" for the name "Christian" was under discussion: "I am opposed to the change. Now, that I am a Baptist, I know; but whether I am a Christian admits of serious [479] doubts--and hence I am opposed to taking that name as a church title." And I fear

that many who profess to have taken the Scriptures of divine truth as their only directory in all things pertaining to Christianity sometimes feel the same embarrassment. How often they seem to blush, and hesitate, when asked what church they belong to. Some will say Reformers, or something else, rather than come square out and say, "I profess to be a Christian--I am a member of the church of God."

But, suppose we admit that none of the ecclesiastical organizations are worthy of this name, and that we, after all our efforts to restore primitive Christianity to the church, or to restore the church to primitive Christianity, have not yet arrived to a point in Scriptural order and Scriptural holiness that would justify us in taking this sacred name, what shall we then do? Shall we remain where we are, and take to ourselves some name more in accordance with our low state of morals? Or, would it not be better to hold on to the name, and try to bring the church up to a point in Christian perfection where she might consistently wear the name? This certainly would be the better course. Whenever a person professing Christianity says that he is not worthy of the name, I would advise him to do one of two things at once: either reform or renounce. Reform in spirit and manners until he could wear the name without blushing, or renounce the profession altogether. But, for the [480] Lord's sake, and for his own soul's sake, I would advise the former.

But it may be said, after all, that names are small matters--that it makes no difference by what name we are called, so the heart is right--that, therefore, though we are right in wearing the name "Christian," still they are not wrong in adopting other names.

But, my dear reader, do you suppose that Christ has no regard for the name by which His people shall be called? If the Lord built the church, and gave it all its laws and ordinances, as clearly shown in the first discourse in this book--if He is the head of the church--if He loved the church, and gave Himself for it--if He sympathizes with the church so much as to regard an act done to the church as done to Himself, as shown in our second discourse--I say, if all these things are so, He must have a will in reference to the name by which His people shall be called. He watches over the church with a kind, but jealous, eye. He will not allow His glory to be given to another.

If it is an honor to a man to have towns, cities and organized societies called for him, is it not still more honor to have churches called for us? Should a portion of the members of the Lord's body organize themselves into a party, and take to themselves the name of some good and great man, would not this be giving to another person a [481] portion of the glory that belongs to Christ? Can we do this, and be guiltless?

But I will leave this investigation with the reader, after propounding one question which I desire every one who may read this discourse to ponder well, in the light of sound reason and of revelation. Here it is:

Can anything be religiously right and Scripturally wrong, at the same time? Can any church name be religiously right when it is unauthorized by the word of God?

Remember, reader, the name of the church is a religious matter, and should be governed by the Holy Scriptures, as long as we hold the great truth that the Bible is higher in authority than the church.

I will now close this discourse with a few words of advice to those who stand upon the Bible, who wear the Christian name.

Dear brethren, you stand on holy ground. Our religious neighbors are correct when they say that we have taken high ground; that we have assumed an elevated position in the religious world. Oh, then, let us show by our daily walk and conversation that we are sincere. Let us give the enemy no reason to speak reproachfully of us, but let our behavior be such "that they who are of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say of us." Never be ashamed of the holy name by which you are called. [482]

It was spoken to the praise of the church at Philadelphia that they had not denied the Lord's name. (See Rev. 3:8.) Yes, notwithstanding the corruption of those times, and the persecutions to which the church was exposed--under which all the seven churches in Asia had erred, more or less, save this one congregation--the Lord said to this church: "Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." They still kept the word of God as their rule of faith and practice, and therefore wore the name of Christ--the name "Christian"--and for this they received the approval of the great head of the church.

My brethren, if this name implies that we are the anointed of the Lord, anointed priests, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God through our Lord Jesus Christ; if this name is intended to distinguish the people of God from all other persons; if this name is intended to point out those who wear it, as the Lord's property, the Lord's lot, the Lord's inheritance; if it is a catholic name, intended to bury and swallow up all party names in religion; if it is a patronymic name, referring to Christ, the author of our holy religion and the founder of the church; if the name "Christian" was given by divine authority, of which there is very strong evidence--I say, if all these things are so, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation? [483]

When Moses approached the burning bush--which burned, but was not consumed--the Lord said unto him: "Put off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). And do not we stand on holy ground? Most assuredly we do; and should we not, then, put off all unrighteousness, and all filthiness of flesh and spirit and practice holiness in the fear of God?

Brethren, this reformation in which we are engaged has not done its work until the people of God who occupy Bible ground in theory have become so upright, so pious, so devout, so heavenly minded, that all who revere the Bible will be constrained to say, "These people are not only Christians in name, but they are Christians in deed and in truth." Brethren, with the proper effort, made according to the word of God, and with His divine assistance, this may be done.

May the great head of the church help us all to do His will and make this discourse a blessing to all who may read it, is my sincere prayer. Amen. [484]

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